

Research article

One day we might be no more: Collective angst and protective action from potential distinctiveness loss

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Abstract

Potential loss of group distinctiveness can represent a threat to the existence of a group. Across three studies (Ns = 42, 60, 94), a mediated-moderation model was tested in which the interactive effects of group identification and potential ingroup distinctiveness loss predicts the desire to engage in ingroup protective action to the extent that collective angst (i.e., concern for the ingroup's future vitality) is aroused. It was hypothesized that the threat of potential distinctiveness loss would result in collective angst and subsequent support for protective action among high, but not necessarily low, identified group members. Results provided support for this model within the context of French Canadian distinctiveness from English Canada (Experiment 1, where the outcome measure was the desire for a sovereign Quebec) and Canadian distinctiveness from the United States (Experiments 2 and 3, where the outcome was support for action to protect Canadian sovereignty and rejection of a North American Union respectively). When and why collective angst facilitates ingroup protective action is discussed. Copyright © 2010 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Group membership provides a person with existential security (Durkheim, 1951). Although individual group members will eventually perish, the group is generally thought to have temporal persistence or continuity (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Sani et al., 2007). To the extent that group members believe their group's future is secure, existential concerns may be minimized. When however the group's future is perceived to be insecure, then existential concerns are most likely to surface (Lewin, 1948). One type of threat to the continuity of the ingroup is the potential loss of group distinctiveness. According to social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), a group is defined by its unique characteristics relative to other groups. Group members are thus motivated to differentiate their ingroup from other salient groups in order to achieve a positively distinct social identity. When the demarcations between the ingroup and a relevant outgroup are blurred, threat is likely to be experienced (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999).

Due to the existential significance of group membership, the potential loss of group distinctiveness might evoke a group-based emotional response that reflects existential concerns. Wohl and Branscombe (2008, 2009) have identified *collective angst* as an emotional response that is based on concern for the ingroup's future existence. Just as feelings of personal angst emerge when a person experiences concern that something negative will befall the self in the future (Barlow, 1988), collective angst emerges when negative events are thought likely to befall the ingroup. The current research examined the idea that because the potential loss of group distinctiveness

speaks to the *raison d'être* of the group as an entity (see Jetten, Spears, & Postmes, 2004), it is likely to evoke concern for the group's future (Wilder, 1986). We argue that when collective angst is elicited, motivation to engage in actions aimed at protecting the distinctiveness of the ingroup should be heightened (e.g., support for Quebec sovereignty from Canada among French Canadians). Importantly, because distinctiveness threats are more likely to affect those who feel a strong tie to the ingroup, the effect of potential distinctiveness loss should be most pronounced among highly identified group members (see Jetten et al., 2004).

Distinctiveness Threat

Because group members accentuate differences between entities categorized as separate groups (Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963), when group members perceive the ingroup and a relevant outgroup as similar they may experience threat (Roccas & Schwartz, 1993). Such *distinctiveness threat* often results in attempts to differentiate the ingroup on available dimensions of comparison (Brewer, 2001; Jetten & Spears, 2004; Spears, Jetten, & Scheepers, 2002), because the narrowing of between-group differences challenges the very essence of the group (Branscombe, Ellemers, et al., 1999; Jetten et al., 2004).

Importantly, greater ingroup identification predicts a stronger desire to achieve and maintain positive distinctiveness

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(Hinkle & Brown, 1990; Kelly, 1988). In a meta-analytic review, Jetten et al. (2004) found that for highly identified group members it is of particular significance to act in ways that establish and maintain a distinctive group identity. Of interest for the current research, high identifiers are motivated to react when they perceive group distinctiveness as being lost by taking action to solidify distinctiveness and increase between-group differentiation (Jetten et al., 2004; Spears et al., 2002). Lalonde (2002), for example, showed that as identification with Canada increased, Canadians expressed greater differentiation between Canadians and Americans. Such desired differentiation is perhaps not surprising because potential loss of distinctiveness to the United States has long been a concern for Canadians (Hoberg, 2000).

Because willingness to engage in collective action is a hallmark of the highly identified group member (see Stürmer & Simon, 2004), we expect that such group members will be especially likely to support policy and actions aimed at maintaining group distinctiveness. Specifically, it was hypothesized that responses to the potential loss of group distinctiveness would be moderated by group identification.

Threats to Distinctiveness and the Minority Group

Our theoretical model is focused on contexts in which the boundaries between two groups might be eliminated, resulting in one inclusive category. According to the ingroup projection model (IPM; Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999), within such a context, group members tend to perceive their ingroup as relatively prototypical of the inclusive category. Highly identified group members show the strongest tendency toward ingroup projection because, relative to low identified group members, a larger portion of their self-concept is derived from their group membership (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004). By projecting ingroup characteristics on the inclusive category, any perceived threat posed by that category would be undermined because relative prototypicality is the equivalent of positive distinctiveness (Turner, 1987).

The current research focuses on the effect of potential distinctiveness loss on members of a minority group. The issue of group position is important as the IPM applies primarily to majority groups (Wenzel, Mummendey, & Waldzus, 2007). We argue that whereas members of majority groups 'project' their own group's attributes onto the inclusive category, such is generally *not* the case for minority group members (see Waldzus, Mummendey, Wenzel, & Boettcher, 2004). Instead, members of minority groups are likely to believe that the inclusive category will reflect the characteristic of the majority group due to their relative power and influence. As a result, minority group members should favor action that distances the ingroup from the relevant outgroup to protect against loss of distinctiveness (see Reicher, 2004; Snyder & Fromkin, 1977; Spears et al., 2002). Lending additional support for this contention, Leonardelli and Brewer (2001) showed that minority groups discriminate more than majority group members.

French Canadians, for example, are acutely sensitive to their minority group status within the larger North America context (Krull & Trovato, 2003) and some perceive their unique cultural heritage as at risk of being engulfed by the Anglophone population of Canada and the United States

(Bouchard & Taylor, 2008; Bourhis, 1994). As a result, the potential loss of group distinctiveness is a central theme of the campaign for achieving sovereignty from Canada by the province of Quebec, which is the only province whose population is predominantly francophone (see Remillard, 1989). We argue that similar processes are at play among the larger Canadian population, as Canadians are perennially concerned with their minority status within the larger North American milieu and the Americanization of Canadian culture (see Adams, 2003; Lalonde, 2002). In response to this threat, Canada passed laws and created organizations (e.g., Canadian Radio Television and Telecommunication Commission) to monitor and regulate external influences (namely American) on Canadian culture (see Mulcahy, 2000). Thus, it would appear that minority group members take action to create distance between the ingroup and an encroaching majority group when it is perceived that their distinctiveness could be lost.

Affective Responses to Distinctiveness Threat: Collective Angst

There is a growing literature that illustrates how particular group-based emotions can lead to specific action tendencies (e.g., Alexander, Brewer, & Herrmann, 1999; Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000; Smith, 1999; Smith, Seger, & Mackie, 2007; Wohl, Branscombe, & Klar, 2006). Potential *future* outcomes and the emotions elicited by them, however, have received little research attention thus far. Because the potential loss of group distinctiveness is an event that *might* occur, emotional responses should be future-oriented. Collective angst captures such an affective response because it reflects concern about what might happen to the ingroup at some future point in time (Wohl & Branscombe, 2008, 2009).

Importantly, the perceived threat that elicits collective angst may be quite removed from the ingroup's current experience. For example, Wohl and Branscombe (2009) showed that collective angst can be elicited by reminders of historical victimization experienced by the ingroup even though those atrocities were not directly experienced by contemporary group members. This is because historical victimization can encourage a siege mentality (i.e., the belief that other groups have negative intentions toward them; Bar-Tal, 2000; Bar-Tal & Antebi, 1992). At the extreme, group members may believe the ingroup is vulnerable to possible extinction (Eidelson & Eidelson, 2003; Kelman, 1992). Although the group might currently be thriving, there exists lingering concerns that the atrocities experienced in the past might befall the group in the future. As a result, group members react to protect the ingroup from a potential future loss of distinctiveness.

Indeed, because concerns about what the future might hold comprise an aversive state (Hogg, 2000), people who feel angst tend to act in ways that are meant to prevent the unwanted future from coming to fruition (see Barlow, 1991; Rank, 1914; Sartre, 1956). Thus, when group members perceive that the boundaries between the ingroup and a relevant outgroup might blur, collective angst should be elicited and members should exhibit a desire to engage in ingroup protective action. Because group distinctiveness is of particular concern for high identifiers, when potential distinctiveness loss is salient,

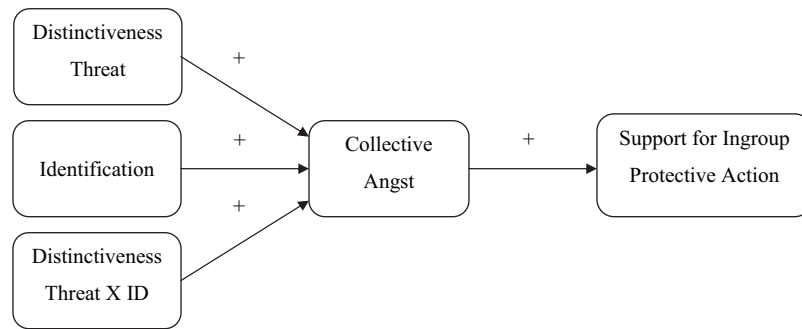


Figure 1. Hypothesized mediated-moderation model with distinctiveness threat, identification, and the interaction term as predictors, collective angst as the mediator, and support for ingroup protective action as the outcome

collective angst should be especially pronounced among these group members. To the extent that group members experience collective angst, their desire to protect the ingroup will increase. Thus, identification should *moderate* the *mediated* effect of collective angst on the relationship between potential distinctiveness loss and desire to take action to protect the ingroup's unique identity (see Figure 1).

Overview of the Present Research

In Experiment 1, we examined the effect of potential distinctiveness loss on a community sample of French Canadians who read a newspaper article indicating that French Canadian culture may merge in the future with Anglophone culture or an article about the geography of the province of Quebec (control). We predicted that potential distinctiveness loss would interact with identification as a French Canadian to elicit collective angst, which would, in turn, motivate French Canadians to support Quebec sovereignty (i.e., independence from Canada).

In Experiment 2 we focused on Canadians' concern about a potential loss of national distinctiveness to the United States. Again, it was hypothesized that potential distinctiveness loss would interact with group identification to influence collective angst and, as a result, support for action to protect Canadian sovereignty. In Experiment 3, we once again capitalized on Canadians' concern about distinctiveness loss to the United States to test our hypotheses. In addition, we tested whether the effects of collective angst are distinguishable from other emotions that may be experienced during negative events (e.g., anger and fear). Because potential loss of distinctiveness focuses members on *future* threats, dangers, or other negative events that might befall their group, emotions that stem from this threat should be future-oriented. Thus, collective angst, but not anger or fear (both of which are oriented toward present, immediate events), should be elicited by potential distinctiveness loss.

EXPERIMENT 1

Method

Participants

Forty-two French-Canadians (24 men, 18 women) from the province of Quebec participated in this experiment. They

ranged in age from 18 to 65 years of age ($M = 33.00$, $SD = 12.84$). As an incentive, each participant was entered in a drawing for one of three gift certificates valued at \$50 each.

Procedure

Participants were recruited via posters placed in various locations around the cities of Gatineau, Montreal, Quebec City, and Sherbrooke, all located in the province of Quebec. The posters mentioned that the study concerned issues regarding the province of Quebec, and provided information for contacting the researchers (email and phone).

Participants were first given a choice about completing the study in either French or English (all materials were constructed in English, then translated into French and back translated by a second bilingual person). All participants elected to complete the study in French. Upon accessing the online study, participants were randomly assigned to one of two websites (corresponding to the distinctiveness threat or control condition). In both conditions, participants first completed a measure assessing the extent to which they identified as a French-Canadian. They then read one of two articles, ostensibly, from a Quebec newspaper. In the distinctiveness threat condition, participants read an article reporting that in subsequent generations French and English Canadian culture may become indistinguishable from one another. Those participants assigned to the control group read an article on the climate and geography of Quebec. After reading the article, participants continued with the dependent measures. When the measured variables were completed, participants were probed for suspicion using an open-ended item ("Describe in your own words, what you think this study is about"). No participant discerned the true nature of the experiment. Thereafter, participants were automatically sent to a website that contained debriefing information.

Measured Variables

As a check of the manipulation, participants were asked to indicate their agreement with the following statement, "In light of the article I just read, it appears that French Canadian culture and Quebec's distinctiveness is secure." This item, along with all other items, were rated on a scale anchored at 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*). Four items ($\alpha = .80$) validated by Doosje, Ellemers, and Spears (1995) were used to

assess the degree to which participants identified with French Canada. These items were: "I identify with French Canada," "I see myself as being a French Canadian," "I feel strong ties to other French Canadians," and "I am pleased to be a French Canadian." Five items adapted from Wohl and Branscombe (2009) were used to assess collective angst ($\alpha = .85$). These items were: "I feel anxious about the future of French Canadian culture," "I feel confident that French Canadian culture will survive (reverse-scored)," "I feel secure about the future of French Canadian culture (reverse-scored)," "I feel that French Canadian culture will always thrive (reverse-scored)," and "I feel concerned that the future vitality of French Canadian culture is in jeopardy." Support for Quebec sovereignty ($\alpha = .91$) was assessed with the following three items: "Sovereignty is the best way to protect the French language in Quebec," "Sovereignty is the best way to protect French culture in Quebec," and "Sovereignty is the best way to promote Quebec's economy."

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Demonstrating a successful manipulation, one-way ANOVA revealed that French-Canadian culture was perceived as less secure in the distinctiveness threat condition ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.23$) than in the control condition ($M = 4.87$, $SD = 1.87$), $F(1, 40) = 6.15$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = 0.15$. For means and standard deviations of all measured variables by condition, see Table 1.

Experimental Effects

Collective angst Collective angst was subjected to a moderated multiple regression (MMR). Identification was centered and a condition by identification interaction variable was computed (for this study and all subsequent). The collective angst scores were regressed on the distinctiveness manipulation variable (control = -1, distinctiveness threat = 1), the centered group identification index, and the interaction term, $R^2 = 0.33$, $F(3, 38) = 6.22$, $p = .002$. While the main effect of the distinctiveness threat manipulation was not a significant predictor of collective angst, $\beta = .14$, $t(38) = 0.99$, $p = .33$, identification did predict collective angst, $\beta = .33$, $t(38) = 2.36$, $p = .02$. As predicted, however, a significant distinctiveness threat by identification interaction qualified these results, $\beta = .53$, $t(38) = 3.91$, $p < .001$. Analyses of the simple slopes showed that the distinctiveness threat manipulation increased collective angst at 1SD above

Table 2. Estimated means for measured variables at 1SD above and below the mean of identification, Experiment 1

	Control		Distinctiveness threat	
	-1SD	+1SD	-1SD	+1SD
Identification				
Collective angst	1.97 _a	2.55 _a	1.61 _b	3.16 _c
Desire for sovereignty	3.79 _a	5.28 _a	3.09 _b	6.06 _c

Note: Comparisons in a given row with different subscripts are significant slopes at $p < .05$. Estimated means are based on effect coding (Control = -1, distinctiveness threat = 1).

the mean of identification, $\beta = .68$, $t(38) = 3.39$, $p = .002$. Conversely, the manipulation decreased collective angst at 1SD below the mean of identification, $\beta = -.41$, $t(38) = -2.15$, $p = .04$.

Desire for Quebec Sovereignty The same analytical approach as used with collective angst was used for desire for Quebec sovereignty, $R^2 = 0.32$, $F(3, 38) = 5.93$, $p = .002$. While the distinctiveness manipulation did not predict desire for Quebec sovereignty, $\beta = .002$, $t(38) = 0.07$, $p = .99$, identification was a significant predictor, $\beta = .44$, $t(38) = 3.16$, $p = .003$. Importantly, the distinctiveness by identification interaction term was significant, $\beta = .42$, $t(38) = 3.13$, $p = .003$. Analyses of the simple slopes, showed that the distinctiveness threat manipulation increased support for Quebec sovereignty at 1SD above the mean of identification, $\beta = .44$, $t(38) = 2.19$, $p = .04$. Conversely, the manipulation decreased support for Quebec sovereignty at 1SD below the mean of identification, $\beta = -.44$, $t(38) = -2.29$, $p = .03$. Means at 1SD above and below the mean of identification are presented by condition in Table 2.

Tests of Mediated-Moderation

Our next goal was to test a mediated-moderation model. To establish mediated-moderation model, moderation must first be established. That is, the interaction between the predictor variables (i.e., the independent variable and the moderating variable) significantly predicts the proposed mediator variables as well as the outcome variable. Next, the predictor variables, their cross product (i.e., the interaction term), and the proposed mediator variable are simultaneously regressed on an outcome variable. Mediated-moderation occurs when the mediator, but not the interaction term, significantly predicts an outcome variable (see Morgan-Lopez & MacKinnon, 2006).

The previous analyses established that the distinctiveness manipulation by identification interaction predicted both collective angst and desire for Quebec sovereignty. A regression test confirmed that collective angst predicted desire for sovereignty, $\beta = .51$, $t(37) = 3.75$, $p = .001$, $R^2 = 0.26$. Consistent with predictions, when collective angst was added to the MMR model predicting desire for sovereignty,¹ $R^2 = 0.38$, $F(4, 37) = 5.79$, $p = .001$, the distinctiveness manipulation by identification interaction no longer predicted desire for sovereignty, $B = .26$, $t(37) = 1.68$, $p = .10$, but collective angst remained a significant predictor of desire for

Table 1. Means and standard deviations for measured variables by condition, Experiment 1

	Control	Distinctiveness threat
Identification	6.36 (1.00) _a	5.93 (0.95) _a
Collective angst	4.10 (0.85) _a	4.20 (0.98) _a
Desire for sovereignty	4.54 (1.58) _a	4.19 (1.87) _a

Note: Comparisons in a given row with different subscripts are significantly different at $p < .05$. Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

¹The Preacher and Hayes (2008) macro to conduct mediated-moderation produces unstandardized (B), but not standardized (β), regression weights. Therefore, we report B s and not β s for this analysis.

Quebec sovereignty, $B = .31$, $t(37) = 2.00$, $p = .05$. Next, we used Preacher and Hayes' (2008) bootstrapping macro with 5000 iterations for testing the conditional indirect effect of the interaction term on support for sovereignty through collective angst (controlling for the unique effects of the condition and identification variables). The indirect effect of the interaction term through collective angst was estimated to lie between .02 and .16 with 95% confidence. Because zero is not in the 95% confidence interval, the indirect effect is indeed significantly different from zero at $p < .05$, thus establishing mediated-moderation.

Discussion

Experiment 1 showed that a possible loss of group distinctiveness could elevate highly identified group members' support for actions aimed at protecting the unique characteristics of the ingroup. In the case of French Canadians residing in Quebec, protecting the ingroup is often framed in terms of formal separation from Canada and the establishment of a sovereign country of Quebec (Remillard, 1989). Mediated-moderation analysis showed that, compared to a control condition, when highly identified French Canadians considered the possible loss of group distinctiveness they experienced greater collective angst and this, in turn, resulted in increased support for Quebec sovereignty. When confronted with potential distinctiveness loss to Anglophone culture, low identified French Canadians reported less collective angst and decreased their support for sovereignty compared to a control condition. These results are consistent with the notion that some individuals in Quebec see participation in the broader Canadian cultural and political context as a means to ensure the vitality of French Canadian culture (cf. Ryan, 1999), while others view sovereignty as the only means of achieving this end.

EXPERIMENT 2

In Experiment 2, our hypotheses were tested in a different intergroup relationship—Canada and the United States. Specifically, we examined the effect of potential loss of distinctiveness on Canadians' support for altering existing relations with the United States. Although Canada and the United States have enjoyed over two centuries of peace (the last armed conflict between the two countries was in 1812), the current relationship can be considered one of antagonistic interdependence, especially on the part of English Canadians (Adams, 2003; Hodson, Esses, & Dovidio, 2006). Although Canadians are culturally and economically tied to the United States, they fiercely reject the notion that Canadians and Americans are cut from the same cloth (see Adams, 2003; Lalonde, 2002). In fact, distinctiveness from American culture is a central component of Canadian identity, and the United States is often perceived by English Canadians as a threat to the distinctiveness of their identity (Lalonde, 2002).

In this study, a sample of Canadian participants was presented with the possible convergence of the two countries in terms of their national security and intelligence organizations.

In contrast to Experiment 1, we tested support for less extreme means of promoting uniqueness of the ingroup than severing relations with the outgroup via sovereignty. Specifically, we assessed support for altering the structural relations with Americans (e.g., curtailing economic interdependence). It was hypothesized that the potential loss of distinctive Canadian national security and intelligence organizations would heighten support for altering existing structural relations with the United States. This relationship was expected to be stronger among highly identified Canadians, and explained by the experience of collective angst.

Method

Participants

A total of 60 introductory psychology students (34 men; 26 women) at Carleton University participated in this experiment in exchange for course credit. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 38 ($M = 19.98$, $SD = 3.68$). The study was accessible only to participants who indicated in mass testing that they were born in Canada.

Procedure

In this online study, participants read an article ostensibly from the national news section of an online Canadian newspaper and, thereafter, completed a series of questions concerning their feelings about Canada and its place on the international stage. In both conditions, prior to reading the article, all participants completed a measure of identification as Canadian. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of the distinctiveness threat or control conditions. In the distinctiveness threat condition, participants read that due to the current war on terrorism, American security and intelligence agencies have circulated the idea of creating "a cross-national security agency." The article then quoted a Canadian political analyst who suggested that, should this ever come to pass, "Canada's national sovereignty might be lost." In the control condition, participants read that Canadian and American security and intelligence agencies would "share information in order to protect their respective nations." Thereafter, participants completed the questionnaires and were then probed for suspicion. No participant discerned the true purpose of the experiment.

Measured Variables

Items assessing identification ($\alpha = .90$) and collective angst ($\alpha = .86$) were the same as those in Experiment 1, except that the reference group was changed to Canada. The manipulation check item read, "In light of the article I have just read, it appears that Canadian identity is secure."

Desire to curtail Canada-US relation was assessed with three items ($\alpha = .75$): "I would vote for a candidate who thought that Canada was too closely involved with the US," "I am in favour of putting limits on the amount of American media shown in Canada," and "I think that Canada is too

closely involved with the US over the issue of security. All items were anchored at (1) *strongly disagree* and (7) *strongly agree*. Higher scores reflect a greater desire to curtail Canada–US relations. We also included four items ($\alpha = .80$) that measured willingness to engage in action to protect Canadian sovereignty: “I would take part in a rally and protest against policies that damage Canadian identity, should one take place,” “I believe that action must be taken immediately to maintain Canadian sovereignty,” and “I would write a letter to my Member of Parliament voicing my concern for Canada’s national sovereignty,” and “If invited, I would speak at a meeting about the threat facing Canada’s national sovereignty.” Higher scores reflect a greater desire to take action to protect Canadian sovereignty.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

One-way ANOVA on the manipulation check item revealed that the manipulation was successful. Participants in the distinctiveness loss condition reported that Canadian identity was less secure ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.72$) than participants in the control condition ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 1.29$), $F(1, 58) = 16.70$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.22$. Means and standard deviations are presented by condition in Table 3.

Experimental Effects

Collective Angst We subjected collective angst to a MMR where collective angst scores were regressed on the distinctiveness manipulation variable (control = -1 , distinctiveness threat = 1), the centered group identification index, and the distinctiveness manipulation by identification interaction term, $R^2 = 0.29$, $F(3, 56) = 7.62$, $p < .001$. The distinctiveness threat manipulation significantly predicted collective angst, $\beta = .43$, $t(56) = 3.82$, $p < .001$, but identification did not, $\beta = .04$, $t(56) = 0.31$, $p = .76$. Importantly, the main effect of the distinctiveness threat manipulation was qualified by a significant distinctiveness by identification interaction, $\beta = .33$, $t(56) = 2.89$, $p = .005$. Analyses of the simple slopes showed that the distinctiveness threat manipulation increased collective angst at 1SD above, $\beta = .75$, $t(56) = 4.72$, $p < .001$, but not below the mean of identification, $\beta = .12$, $t(56) = 0.74$, $p = .46$.

Willingness to Take Action Willingness to take action was regressed on the distinctiveness manipulation, the centered

identification score, and the interaction term, $R^2 = 0.23$, $F(3, 56) = 5.64$, $p = .002$. The distinctiveness manipulation, $\beta = .33$, $t(56) = 2.82$, $p = .007$, but not identification, $\beta = .07$, $t(56) = 0.57$, $p = .57$, predicted willingness to take action to protect Canadian sovereignty. A significant distinctiveness by identification interaction qualified these results, $\beta = .36$, $t(56) = 3.03$, $p = .004$. Simple slope analyses showed that the distinctiveness threat manipulation increased willingness to take action at 1SD above, $\beta = .68$, $t(56) = 4.11$, $p < .001$, but not below the mean of identification, $\beta = -.01$, $t(56) = -.08$, $p = .93$.

Desire to Curtail Canada–US Relations We next regressed desire to curtail Canada–US relations on the distinctiveness manipulation variable, the centered identification score, and the interaction term, $R^2 = 0.23$, $F(3, 55) = 5.43$, $p = .002$. Although condition significantly predicted desire to curtail relations, $\beta = .41$, $t(56) = 3.42$, $p < .001$, this was not the case for identification, $\beta = -.19$, $t(56) = -1.60$, $p = .12$, or the interaction term, $\beta = .07$, $t(56) = 0.62$, $p = .54$. Thus, identification did not moderate the effect of distinctiveness threat on desire to curtail relations with the United States. Means at 1SD above and below the mean of identification are shown by condition in Table 4.

Tests of Mediated-Moderation

Our next goal was to test a mediated-moderation model. The previous analyses established that the manipulation by identification interaction predicted both collective angst and greater willingness to take action to protect Canadian sovereignty. A regression test confirmed that collective angst was related to willingness to protect Canadian sovereignty, $\beta = .51$, $t(55) = 4.57$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.26$. More importantly, when collective angst was added to the MMR model, $R^2 = 0.33$, $F(4, 55) = 6.67$, $p < .001$, the manipulation by identification interaction no longer predicted willingness to take action to protect sovereignty, $B = .05$, $t(55) = 0.49$, $p = .62$, but collective angst remained a significant predictor of willingness to take action to protect Canadian sovereignty, $B = .38$, $t(55) = 2.78$, $p = .007$. Next, we used Preacher and Hayes’ (2008) bootstrapping macro with 5000 iterations for testing the conditional indirect effect of the interaction term on willingness to take action through collective angst (controlling for the effects of condition and identification). The indirect effect was estimated to lie between .02 and .60 with 95% confidence. Because zero is not in the 95% confidence interval, the indirect effect is indeed significantly different from zero at $p < .05$, establishing mediated-moderation.

Table 4. Estimated means for measured variables at 1SD above and below the mean of Identification, Experiment 2

	Control		Distinctiveness threat	
	−1SD	+1SD	−1SD	+1SD
Identification				
Collective Angst	3.67 _a	3.75 _a	3.81 _a	4.62 _b
Desire to curtail Canada–US relations	4.61 _a	4.17 _a	5.00 _a	4.74 _a
Willingness to take action	3.74 _a	3.90 _a	3.72 _a	4.73 _b

Note: Comparisons in a given row with different subscripts are significant slopes at $p < .05$. Estimated means are based on effect coding (Control = -1 , distinctiveness threat = 1).

Table 3. Means and standard deviations for measured variables by condition, Experiment 2

	Control	Distinctiveness threat
Identification	5.73 (1.40) _a	5.49 (1.21) _a
Collective angst	3.17 (1.08) _a	4.18 (1.07) _b
Desire to curtail Canada–US relations	3.88 (1.16) _a	4.89 (1.01) _b
Willingness to take action	3.38 (1.10) _a	4.18 (1.26) _b

Note: Comparisons in a given row with different subscripts are significantly different at $p < .05$. Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

Discussion

Experiment 2 replicated and extended the findings of Experiment 1 to a different intergroup context. Specifically, the results suggest that identification with the group whose distinctiveness might be lost in the future moderated the effects of threat on endorsement of protective action via collective angst. Highly identified group members experienced heightened collective angst and this, in turn, increased willingness to take action when the future of the ingroup's distinctiveness was perceived to be under threat. However, this emotional process did not appear to influence desire to curtail relations with the United States. Although the presence of a distinctiveness threat prompted Canadian participants to desire a curbed relationship between Canada and the United States, identification with Canada did not moderate this relationship. It is possible that, although Canada is a minority in comparison to the United States, because the United States is Canada's largest trading partner (Rao, Tang, & Wang, 2004) both high and low identifiers realize that unilaterally limiting this relationship might not be in Canada's best interests. Indeed, curtailing relations would be detrimental to the economic future of Canada. The possible merging of security and intelligence agencies, however, might undermine Canada's sovereignty. This perception is because Canadians (due to their minority status in relation to Americans) are likely to view a merged agency as having the characteristics of (and being dominated by) the United States (see Wenzle et al., 2007). For Canadians, their defense is likely to be perceived as being eventually controlled by the United States. When a country becomes reliant on another for defense of its borders, their ability to maintain autonomy is compromised (Layne, 1987).

EXPERIMENT 3

In the previous two experiments we examined group members' collective angst when the ingroup's distinctiveness might be lost. In Experiment 3, we assess whether collective angst can be distinguished from other negative emotional responses that might occur in response to current intergroup events—specifically anger and fear. Fear stems from an immediate surge in arousal and an activation of the fight-or-flight response when confronted with a concrete and sudden danger (Gray, 1982; Lazarus, 1991), whereas anger occurs as a result of a perceived mistreatment or frustration (Berkowitz, 1990). Thus, unlike collective angst, both fear and anger are responses to present events; accordingly, neither of these emotions should be elicited when threats posed by possible future events are salient (see also Barlow, 1991; Davis, 1992; LeDoux, 2000). In Experiment 3, we also directly assess the affective component of group identification (Cameron, 2004).

Although the findings of Experiments 1 and 2 were in line with our hypotheses, it could be argued that in both prior studies an asymmetry in threat-level was built into the manipulation by overtly stating which group would dominate should a merger transpire. We, therefore, altered our manipulation by removing all reference to which group might subsume the other. In Experiment 3, participants in the distinctiveness threat condition read only that, akin to the European Union (EU), Canada and the United States were

considering the creation of a North American Union (NAU) between the two countries. Two control comparison conditions were included in this study. In a threat-relevant control condition, participants read that although a NAU had been considered, both countries had decided that it would not be in either of their interests and the plan would not go forward. In a threat-irrelevant control condition, participants simply read that Canada and the United States share the longest non-militarized border in the world. We then assessed collective angst and support for a NAU. It was hypothesized that highly identified Canadians would be relatively unfavorable toward a NAU when it is suggested as a possibility (i.e., in the distinctiveness threat condition). We expected that the relationship between identification and distinctiveness threat on support for a NAU would hold only to the extent that Canadians experience collective angst. This is because highly identified Canadians should become concerned for their group's future vitality when a NAU remains a possibility. As a function of their emotional response to this threat highly identified Canadians should withhold support for the NAU.

Method

Participants

A total of 94 introductory psychology students (19 men; 75 women) at Carleton University participated in this experiment in exchange for course credit. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 34 ($M = 20.12$, $SD = 3.81$). The study was accessible only to participants who indicated in mass testing that they were born in Canada.

Procedure

As in Experiment 2, after completing a measure of Canadian identification, participants read an article, ostensibly, from the national news section of an online Canadian newspaper. In the distinctiveness threat condition, participants read that government officials from both Canada and the United States were in high-level discussions about the possibility of forming a NAU akin to the EU. Participants were told that a deal had not yet been signed, but if it were, a likely outcome would be a common currency and greater cross-national integration. In the threat-related control condition, participants read that although there had been high-level discussions about a possible NAU, it had been decided that such a plan would not go forward. In the threat-unrelated control condition, participants simply read that the border between Canada and the United States is of significance because it is the longest non-militarized border in the world. After exposure to this information, all participants completed the dependent measures and were then probed for suspicion. No participant discerned the true purpose of the experiment.

Measures

For Experiment 3, identification was measured using the four affective tie items from Cameron's (2004) measure of group

identification ($\alpha = .95$) (e.g., “In general, I’m glad to be a Canadian”). This component reflects the emotional attachment members have for the ingroup and has been shown to predict willingness to engage in acts aimed at protecting the ingroup, over and above other dimensions of identification (see Giguère & Lalonde, 2010). As a check on the manipulation, participants were asked, “In light of the article I just read, a NAU appears to be a distinct possibility.”

Three group-based emotions were assessed in Experiment 3: Collective angst, anger, and fear. Items assessing collective angst were the same as those in Experiment 2. To assess collective anger and fear, participants were asked to consider their feelings *as a Canadian* when contemplating how their group is affected by the situation outlined in the news article. The three anger items ($\alpha = .86$) were: “The information contained in the article makes me feel very angry,” “The article made me feel rather angry,” and “I am not feeling anger at all regarding the content of the article I just read” (reverse-scored). The three fear items ($\alpha = .86$) were: “The information provided in the article makes me feel afraid,” “I feel fearful as a result of the article,” and “The content of the article did not make me feel afraid” (reverse-scored). Three items were also included to assess support for a NAU ($\alpha = .93$). These items were: “I support a European-style union between Canada and the United States,” “I think a North American Union is a bad idea for Canada” (reverse-scored), and “I see a lot of benefits for Canada in a North American Union.” All measures were anchored at 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*).

Results

Preliminary Analysis

One-way ANOVA on the manipulation check item revealed that the manipulation was successful, $F(2, 91) = 6.12$, $p = .003$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.12$. Canadian participants perceived a NAU as a possibility more so in the distinctiveness threat condition compared to those in either the threat-related or threat-unrelated control conditions, $ps < .03$. The difference between the no threat and control condition was not significant, $p = .81$. Additionally, there were no significant differences between the threat-related and threat-unrelated control conditions on any of the dependent measures, $ps > .45$; we therefore collapsed over the two control conditions, which was coded as -1 and the distinctiveness threat condition was coded as 1 for all subsequent analyses. The means and standard deviations are presented by condition in Table 5.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using LISREL 8.80 software (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2006) was then used to determine whether the emotion items assessing collective angst, anger, and fear comprised distinct factors. The proposed three factor structure was a very good fit to the data, $\chi^2(41) = 75.63$, $p < .001$; CFI = 0.97; SRMR = 0.05; RMSEA = 0.08. A χ^2 difference test indicated that this three factor model fit the data significantly better than a single factor model (i.e., a model in which all the emotions assessed were collapsed), $\chi^2(44) = 583.03$; $\chi^2_{\text{dif}}(3) = 507.40$, $p < .001$. Thus, collective angst, anger, and fear were empirically distinguishable.

Experimental Effects

Collective Angst MMR on collective angst, $R^2 = 0.46$, $F(3, 90) = 25.84$, $p < .001$, revealed both a main effect of the distinctiveness manipulation, $\beta = .45$, $t(90) = 5.74$, $p < .001$, and identification (centered), $\beta = .59$, $t(90) = 5.54$, $p < .001$. A significant distinctiveness by identification interaction qualified these results, $\beta = .28$, $t(90) = 2.62$, $p = .01$. Analyses of the simple slopes showed that the distinctiveness threat manipulation increased collective angst at 1SD above, $\beta = .71$, $t(90) = 5.98$, $p < .001$, but not below the mean of identification, $\beta = .19$, $t(90) = 1.36$, $p = .18$.

Anger The MMR, $R^2 = 0.05$, $F(3, 90) = 1.47$, $p = .23$, revealed no main effect of the distinctiveness manipulation on expressed anger, $\beta = .01$, $t(90) = 0.01$, $p = .99$. There was, however, a significant effect of identification, $\beta = .29$, $t(90) = 2.04$, $p = .05$. Importantly, the distinctiveness manipulation by identification interaction failed to predict the extent to which participants expressed anger, $\beta = .15$, $t(90) = 1.08$, $p = .28$.

Fear The MMR, $R^2 = 0.02$, $F(3, 90) = 0.65$, $p = .59$, showed that neither the distinctiveness manipulation, $\beta = -.01$, $t(90) = -.13$, $p = .90$, nor identification, $\beta = .19$, $t(90) = 1.30$, $p = .20$, predicted the expression of fear. Moreover, the distinctiveness manipulation by identification interaction was also not a significant predictor of fear, $\beta = .07$, $t(90) = 0.51$, $p = .62$.

Support for a North American Union The same MMR as previously used, $R^2 = 0.21$, $F(3, 90) = 8.01$, $p < .001$, showed both a main effect of the distinctiveness manipulation, $\beta = -.29$, $t(90) = -3.04$, $p = .003$, and identification on support for a NAU, $\beta = -.43$, $t(90) = -3.31$, $p = .001$. These main effects were qualified by a significant interaction, $\beta = -.27$, $t(90) = -2.11$, $p = .04$. Analyses of the simple slopes showed that the distinctiveness threat manipulation decreased support for the NAU at 1SD above, $\beta = -.55$, $t(90) = -3.78$, $p < .001$, but not at 1SD below the mean of identification, $\beta = -.03$, $t(90) = 0.18$, $p = .86$. The means at 1SD above and below the mean of identification are presented by condition in Table 6.

Tests of Mediated-Moderation

Our next goal was to test a mediated-moderation model. The previous analyses established that the manipulation by identification interaction predicted both collective angst and support for a NAU. A linear regression confirmed that collective angst was related to support for a NAU, $\beta = -.46$, $t(89) = -4.91$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.21$. More importantly, when collective angst was added to the MMR models, $R^2 = 0.25$, $F(4, 89) = 7.45$, $p < .001$, the manipulation by identification interaction no longer predicted support for a NAU, $B = -.19$, $t(89) = -1.50$, $p = .14$, but collective angst remained a significant predictor of the latter, $B = -.27$, $t(89) = 2.19$, $p = .03$. Next, we used Preacher and Hayes’ (2008) bootstrapping macro with 5000 iterations for testing the conditional indirect effect of the interaction term on willingness to take action through collective angst (controlling for the effects of condition and identification). The indirect effect was estimated to lie between $-.61$ and $-.15$ with 95% confidence. Because

Table 5. Means and standard deviations for measured variables by condition, Experiment 3

	Threat-unrelated control	Threat-related control	Distinctiveness threat
Identification	6.18 (1.31) _a	6.05 (1.59) _a	6.38 (.89) _a
Collective angst	2.91 (1.18) _a	2.81 (.98) _a	4.56 (1.79) _b
Intergroup anger	2.73 (1.42) _a	2.60 (1.32) _a	2.76 (1.31) _a
Intergroup fear	2.97 (1.48) _a	3.32 (1.89) _a	3.17 (2.06) _a
Support for a NAU	4.40 (1.07) _a	4.89 (1.59) _a	3.52 (1.74) _b

Note: Comparisons in a given row with different subscripts are significant different at $p < .05$. Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations. NAU = North American Union.

zero is not in the 95% confidence interval, the indirect effect is indeed significantly different from zero at $p < .05$, establishing mediated-moderation.

Discussion

Results from Experiment 3 are important in four main respects. First, they illustrate that collective angst, anger, and fear are empirically distinguishable. Second, while a future event that reflects a possible lack of group distinctiveness heightened collective angst, it had no effect on present-oriented emotions such as anger and fear. Third, the results showed that group identification plays a moderating role in the elicitation of collective angst, as well as decreasing support for policies that may decrease distinctiveness. As identification with Canada increased, Canadians in the distinctiveness condition felt more angst and were more willing to take action to protect the ingroup by withholding support for a NAU. Lastly, the results observed in Experiments 1 and 2 were replicated using a manipulation void of possible threat-level asymmetry. In Experiments 1 and 2 the distinctiveness threat manipulation contained an explicit statement that suggested the participants' ingroup might be dominated by the outgroup at some future time. In Study 3, even with this power asymmetry removed, support for our predicted mediated-moderation model was again obtained.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In all three experiments we manipulated the potential loss of ingroup distinctiveness. When distinctiveness threat was present, highly identified group members reacted by supporting actions aimed at distancing the ingroup from a relevant

outgroup. Importantly, this effect was mediated by collective angst. In Experiment 1, highly identified French Canadians faced with a potential distinctiveness threat expressed support for the sovereignty of Quebec to the extent that collective angst was experienced. Results from Experiments 2 and 3 replicated and extended these findings within the Canadian-US context. Specifically, greater identification with Canada increased support for actions aimed at protecting Canadian sovereignty from the United States (Experiment 2) and withholding support for a NAU (Experiment 3) when the potential loss of group distinctiveness with the United States was salient. Once again, collective angst mediated this effect.

French Canadians have long been attuned to ensuring the vitality of their group's culture because they live in a predominantly Anglophone context (Baumeister, 2003). In fact, this concern has been one of the driving forces behind the separatist movement in Quebec (Burgess, 1996). We showed that under conditions of potential distinctiveness loss, highly identified Quebecers reported heightened levels of collective angst, which in turn increased their support of sovereignty. These results suggest that endorsement of Quebec sovereignty is, in part, due to collective angst among highly identified French Canadians when they anticipate a loss of group distinctiveness. Importantly, however, some Quebecers view involvement in the Canadian federation and broader Canadian and Anglophone culture as a mean to ensure their group's vitality (cf., Ryan, 1999). Perhaps reflecting this view, when faced with the prospect of a merger between French and Anglophone cultures, low identified Quebecers reported reduced collective angst and less support for Quebec sovereignty. For these participants, the potential merger between French and Anglophone cultures might suggest an end to decades of social and cultural uncertainty. Such a reduction in uncertainty would decrease collective angst and support for sovereignty.

Similar to some French Canadians' concern about their cultural distinctiveness from English Canada, Canadians in general are concerned with their cultural distinctiveness from the United States. Indeed, the relationship between Canada and the United States has been characterized by a tension between the economic benefits of close commercial relations with the United States and concerns that close relations would "Americanize" Canadian culture (Nossal, 1985). Thus, when the potential loss of distinctiveness from the United States was salient, highly identified Canadians responded by supporting action that would protect Canada culture from Americanization.

These results are in line with predictions of the IPM (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999). In the current research, minority group members experienced collective angst when

Table 6. Estimated means for measured variables at 1SD above and below the mean of Identification, Experiment 3

	Control		Distinctiveness threat	
	-1SD	+1SD	-1SD	+1SD
Identification				
Collective angst	2.71 _a	4.56 _b	3.02 _a	5.74 _c
Intergroup anger	2.30 _a	3.06 _a	2.09 _a	3.27 _a
Intergroup fear	2.80 _a	2.65 _a	3.48 _a	3.58 _a
Support for a NAU	4.83 _a	4.78 _a	3.47 _b	2.56 _c

Note: Comparisons in a given row with different subscripts are significantly slopes at $p < .05$. Estimated means are based on effect coding (Control = -1, distinctiveness threat = 1).

they were presented with the potential formation of an inclusive category with a majority group, and such concern for the ingroup's future vitality increased as a function of ingroup identification. This response is likely because of a belief that the majority group's attributes would shape the new inclusive category, thus harming (if not engulfing) the ingroup's identity (see Waldzus et al., 2004; Wenzle et al., 2007). When group distinctiveness is perceived to be under threat, group members take action to protect ingroup uniqueness and differentiate their group from outgroups (see also Reicher, 2004; Spears et al., 2002). The current research demonstrated that when presented with a future focused distinctiveness threat group members (especially those who are highly identified) resist the possible creation of an inclusive category by supporting action that would maintain or create distance from the outgroup majority (e.g., French Canadian support for Quebec sovereignty).

The IPM, as well as our results, contrast with work that has shown that creating a common ingroup identity increases helping across subgroup boundaries (Nier, Gaertner, Dovidio, Banker, & Ward, 2001), support for cooperative intergroup policies (Beaton, Dovidio, & Léger, 2008), as well as intergroup forgiveness for past harm doing (Wohl & Branscombe, 2005). This contrasting research, however, presupposes that subgroups are equivalent in terms of size and power within the inclusive category. When the inclusive category is not believed to be representative of the ingroup, as minority groups are apt to believe, highly identified group members tend to resist the inclusive category. As shown across our three experiments, this resistance is accomplished by favoring action that maintains differentiation between the ingroup and the outgroup majority.

Collective Angst in the Face of Potential Distinctiveness Loss

For the most part, research concerning group identity threat has focused on immediate threats, particularly to group value (see Branscombe et al., 1999), leaving the anticipation of future threat unexplored. Yet the anticipation of losing the distinctive features of an ingroup shapes many intergroup contexts (e.g., French Canadians in Quebec and Welsh in the U.K.). The current research extends the literature by examining this understudied aspect of group threat. Like other forms of threat, it was hypothesized that distinctiveness threat would give rise to a negative emotional state—collective angst—which reflects the future aspect of the threat.

The notion that members of a currently vibrant group would feel threatened or even contemplate collective strategies that might lead to intergroup conflict is counterintuitive. If the group is currently thriving, why would members feel collective angst? The answer is found in the human capacity to project the ingroup into the future. Just as people can feel angst about negative events that might impact the personal self, group members can feel collective angst about the future of their group. Although the ingroup might currently be in good stead, the future is unknown, thus opening the door to the possibility that what is yet to come is not as bright as contemporary experience suggests (see Eidelson & Eidelson, 2003). When events make such a possibility salient, collective angst can be

elicited among highly identified group members, which increases their motivation to protect the group's future.

By identifying collective angst as the psychological mechanism that can lead to ingroup protective action, the current work opens an important avenue for understanding many intergroup tensions. For example, although currently vibrant, some communities in the province of Quebec anticipate their local cultures may one day be no more and have taken strategies to address this threat. The town of Herouville in the province of Quebec declared in the past few years that immigrants must conform to French Canadian values and traditions (National Post, 2007) and that people will be forbidden from wearing ceremonial religious daggers (e.g., kirpans worn by some Sikhs) or coverings over the face (e.g., hijabs worn by some Muslims). From the standpoint of the current research, what is particularly striking about such attempts to protect the ingroup is that there is no evidence that the distinctiveness of the French Canadian culture in Herouville is under threat by any immigrant groups (i.e., at the time the declaration was made, no immigrants resided in Herouville nor were there indications that immigrants were planning to move to this remote community). Although the community is not experiencing an immediate threat to its cultural identity, the residents of Herouville may have perceived threat to the *future* of their group's values and traditions within the province of Quebec (see Bouchard & Taylor, 2008). Our results suggest that collective angst may be an important emotional force underlying the actions of the residents of Herouville, and perhaps other similar actions that have taken place in other jurisdictions (e.g., laws in France on secularity and conspicuous religious symbols in schools; Gokariksel & Mitchell, 2005).

LIMITATIONS

Some limitations of the current research should be noted. Participants in Experiments 2 and 3 were university students and thus may not be representative of the general population. Although Experiment 1 employed a community sample of French Canadians, and similar effects were observed, we cannot know how representative they are of the French Canadian population in general. It should be noted, however, that we observed the same effects across three experiments with different samples and different intergroup contexts. In addition, all experiments were conducted online via the internet. For sensitive matters such as intergroup emotional responses there is evidence that greater honesty and less socially desirable responses are obtained using this medium (Evans, Garcia, Garcia, & Baron, 2003).

CONCLUSION

All cultural groups, like those in the present experiments, seek some degree of distinctiveness from other social groups (Jetten et al., 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The present research provides insight into the emotional consequences as well as behavioral tendencies of group members who are confronted

with the potential loss of group distinctiveness. When those who highly identify with their group appraise the ingroup's distinctiveness as potentially being lost, they favor actions aimed at preventing that unwanted future. These action tendencies are driven by feelings of collective angst. Consistent with the social identity perspective, when threatened, group members mount defenses that are aimed at protecting the ingroup, even when the threat has not in actuality been realized.

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